

Name _____

Date _____



Earth Day

Today we're going to talk about Earth Day and the environment...in just a minute.

In the 1960s Americans started to pay more attention to the environment. After two big oil spills in 1969 led to fires and the deaths of many animals, Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin decided to take action.

The senator saw that humans were polluting the air and water, hurting ourselves and other living species. He took inspiration from the passionate young people protesting the Vietnam War. Nelson hoped people would support his cause the same way and encourage the government to pass environmental protection laws.

With support from activists and student volunteers, the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970. Over 20 million people participated across America. The event made politicians pay attention. They passed laws to protect the air, water, and endangered species. The government also created the Environmental Protection Agency.

After the first Earth Day, Nelson continued to work with students and politicians to educate people about the environment. In 1995, President Bill Clinton awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his important work.

Today, Earth Day is an international event celebrated by over one billion people every year. People participate in demonstrations, educational talks, and volunteer activities focused on taking care of the environment in big and small ways.

What are some ways you help protect the environment in your daily life?